

Western & Southern Open

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Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

Ashleigh Barty

Press Conference



A. BARTY/B. Krejčíková

6-2, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: A good match today. She's a tricky opponent, and you have played a lot recently. Just talk us through the match and what made the difference today.

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, I feel like I did a good job looking after my own serves. For all but one service game, I felt like a lot of the time I was in control of it. That just allowed me to be more free on Barbora's service games. I felt like overall I was able to use my forehand and slice effectively.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Were you happy to have the first match of the day, considering the heat? How much of a factor was the heat out there?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Oh, it was just like a Brisbane summer day. The heat's certainly not a problem for me. It's nice to play the first match of the day. I mean, you know when your start time is, which is not very regular in the tennis world. It's often you're waiting and trying to predict when you may be on.

So it's nice to be first off and kind of know when you're starting. But the heat is not a factor. It's nice to be playing in some sunshine.

Q. You mentioned that service game that got away from you in the second set. When that happens, what's the most important thing to turning that set back around and sort of, I don't know, get in control again and pulling away the way that you did?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Oh, I think it wasn't necessarily that it got away from me. I mean, I missed a forehand that clicked the tape and went long. Then she saw two or three second serves. That was kind of it. She made some good returns.

That's sometimes how fickle the tennis game can be. You

make a good return or you're able to be assertive here and there and it can change things.

I think it was important not to panic or stress about that game, because I had doing such a good job throughout the whole match, looking after my own serves and getting into Barbora's service games. So it was just staying patient, knowing that I was doing the right things. It was just going to take some time.

Q. After the first match, you mentioned that the rain delay might have benefited you a little bit, just giving you that extra day. Now that you've got a few matches under your belt here, what is your confidence level right now? Do you feel like you are now kind of back into somewhat of a rhythm now?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: I'm not sure I ever said that the rain benefited me. I mean, it gave me an extra day of doing nothing. We didn't hit any extra tennis balls, didn't get anything extra in. It was just that there was a shift in schedule and we accepted that and prepared to play the next day.

I think, you know, I feel like it's nice to get a couple of matches now here in Cincy. They're different conditions, and each match you get to play in these conditions you get more and more used to it. I think I'm just able to adjust and adapt and look forward to my next one, no doubt.

Q. Looking ahead to the next one, it's either Kerber or Kvitová. Kerber's got the first set 6-4. Can you just look at each of the two players as you look ahead? And Kerber seems to have found a second wind, let's just say, with the way she's been playing over the last couple of months.

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, Angie, she's never been far off her best. She never is. Even on some days where she's not having or playing her best tennis, she finds a way to scrap and fight and stay in matches and give herself an opportunity.

She's one of the best competitors in the world. She knows how to play big tournaments, knows how to play big

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matches. She's really locked down into the Angie of old, I think, in a sense where she's confident, she's aggressive, but she's able to run and to move and put the ball in tricky spots, to not let you dictate too much.

That's a challenge of when you play against Angie is you have to almost ride a fine line a little bit of not pressing too much but not being too defensive where she can move you around the court.

As for Petra, we have played many a times, and the challenge for me is always trying to accept the fact that I'm not necessarily going to be in control of a lot of the points, and it's trying to neutralize as best that I can. And then when I do have that opportunity, is to be assertive and be aggressive and get Petra on the move.

I think either one of the matchups, very different matchups, but both girls that test me in different ways, and I love the challenge that comes from both of them.

Q. As far as Petra is concerned, what turned things around for you? Because she had that early run in the beginning with wins over you. Was it Miami that you started to turn it around a couple of years ago? So what was the difference?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Tactically we changed a few different things, and I think as well once you get beaten up by someone a few times in a row, you're forced to change, and it forced tactical changes from us. I think also a little bit of self-belief and confidence.

I played Petra quite a lot when I was younger, and she was at her very, very best. I think I have been able to find a way to make matches a little bit more even.

I mean, we have still gone back and forth. I certainly don't feel like there is one person that's more assertive than the other. It's a really evenly keeled head-to-head, I think, without knowing it exactly, but I feel like each and every match against Petra is just I have to play my best tennis to compete. And if I don't, she'll take it away from me quite quickly.

Q. After your first-round match, it was a little bit scratchy and you said that practices were a little bit scratchy, as well. Seems on one hand you're serving incredibly well, but on the other, your return, your opponents are having a tough time holding serve against you. Where have the adjustments been made to just kind of ante up your service game while also being really sharp on your return this week?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, we came into this week with a

bit of a focus of happy to get after my serve a bit more. I feel like you get rewarded for hitting your spots and getting in first ball, first strike here. Even though at times maybe it means my percentage isn't quite as high as I would like it, I'm also getting free points. I know when I make my first serve and hit my spots, I can get those free points. It's finding that balance.

Then I think with returns, the conditions here are, I find I'm able to control my slice and the chip return quite well and actually get a good mix of dip and not always a short one but able to push my opponents back and then try and work the court and work the balls a little bit more.

So it's more just trying, for me, to sometimes be aggressive off the return, but also be able to neutralize and then try and set up the point within the first couple of shots, not necessarily just off the return itself.

Q. A couple of nontennis questions. No doubt you're keeping tabs of what's happening back here at home with all the lockdowns and whatnot. In one sense, as much as you love being at home, are you actually relieved not being back here with all that's going on? You're able to enjoy quite an element of freedom with the travel?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: I wouldn't say I'm ever relieved to not be at home or to not be in Australia and that we certainly are keeping track of how things are going, particularly on the Eastern Seaboard where a lot of our friends and family are.

I know that Sydney is in the hurt locker at the moment, and Melbourne is struggling, as well, and I know that Brisbane has been teetering on the edge a little bit. I think we are sending only good vibes kind of back home to hope that these lockdowns are then done for the right reasons and everything can finish up and it doesn't linger on too long.

But, you know, touch wood, we haven't had any of our closest friends or family that have been too ill. I think that's kind of the most -- we're sending our best to everyone back home.

Yeah, I mean, I'm very fortunate that I'm getting to do what I love to do here in America at the moment, and we have our restrictions, we abide by the rules, and we do what we need to because we have had a tour up and running for this year.

Yeah, I'd be home in a heartbeat, any chance. I love being at home. There is certainly not a relief or anything like that to not be in Australia, but we certainly feel for everyone back home at the moment.

Q. Another nontennis question. I know how much you love your coffee, and so does Sam and I think Storm, quite a few of you. The other day you mentioned about going around or traveling with your, I think you said, coffee beans. What type of coffee do you go for? Do you have one of those simple coffee presses that you travel with? Which I bought in London a couple of weeks ago and it's amazing. Yeah, what coffee do you like and travel with, and do you experiment with different coffees?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, I travel with a French press and an AeroPress, just to have two options, and usually every tournament we go to, one of us has a cafe that we have been to before, so I have got a little section of all my local cafes from the tournaments, so we try and get out to those if we can.

This year, some places we haven't been able to; some places we have. It's been nice to get some sort of a mixture, but I'm pretty simple. I'm just a black coffee cup in the morning, and then I'm set.

Q. Is there a coffee from a particular country, or it's just what you think smells just fantastic and you want to try? I will give you a quick recommendation, having been in Ethiopia and Kenya, some of the most amazing coffees come from there. That's what I was sort of getting at. Is there a particular country's coffee or brand that you like, or particularly go for?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Oh, I mean, the brand I'm most used to is Merlo, which is a coffee that's home in Brissie. That's my local and that's what I'll travel with most of the time.

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